

# THE *LAN* CEREMONY AND OTHER RITUAL CEREMONIES IN THE ACHAEMENID PERIOD: THE PERSEPOLIS FORTIFICATION TABLETS\*

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During Ernst Herzfeld's excavations on behalf of the Oriental Institute Chicago at Persepolis in 1933-34, about 30,000 tablets and clay fragments, most of them inscribed in Elamite script and language,<sup>1</sup> were discovered in the fortifications in the northeastern corner of the platform. A number of these tablets are published in *Persepolis Fortification Tablets*. The texts showed that these tablets were in fact payments, invoices, receipts and financial and accountancy reports dating between the 13<sup>th</sup> year and the 28<sup>th</sup> year of Darius the Great. The regions in question are from east of Neiriz in Fars province to the border of Khuzistan province.<sup>2</sup>

The discovery of such a large collection of texts at Persepolis gave hope that many Achaemenid puzzles and historical and political problems might be solved, but contrary to expectations this did not happen. Research on these texts has mainly produced new and interesting questions, and from the beginning they revealed the advanced administrative system during Darius' reign and the Achaemenid interest in administrative organisation, as indicated in the Old Testament.<sup>3</sup> One of the subjects dealt with by the archives is regular and specified payments received by workers.<sup>4</sup> These workers were sometimes brought from near or distant towns or they were employed from other countries. A smaller collection of about 750 tablets, found in the Treasury, relates to salaries and wages of workers or other people who were employed at Persepolis and nearby settlements. Among the Persepolis Fortification Tablets (PFT), a number of texts deal with religious ceremonies, gods and priests in the Achaemenid period. The Fortification tablets were divided into different categories from A to W. The religious and ritual subjects are placed mainly in categories E, K<sub>1</sub>, K<sub>2</sub>, K<sub>3</sub>. There are also related entries in the categories V (Journals), D, G, H, M and T.<sup>5</sup> There are 76 texts mentioned in this paper, mostly from categories K<sub>1</sub> and K<sub>3</sub>. Hereafter all texts with a religious theme will be referred to as "Ritual Payments".

Among the Fortification Tablets there are many Ritual Payment texts in which commodities are allocated for *Lan*, written as *la-an* in Elamite. This seems to be a ritual ceremony. Before the Achaemenid period, *Lan* is used in Elamite texts with a different meaning and it appears in combination with a variety of words.<sup>6</sup> The exact meaning of *Lan* in Achaemenid texts is not very clear, but apparently this ceremony has an Elamite origin. Earlier Elamite texts, like those from Haft Tappch, mention a similar ceremony<sup>7</sup> which is not called *Lan*. *Lan* is probably an Elamite word because of the lack of "L" in Old Persian and the existence of the *la* root in the Elamite language. It seems that *Lan* was a ritual ceremony performed on its own or for a god. Hallock believed that the word *Lan* is derived from the Elamite root *la-* which in Achaemenid Elamite means "to send forth" and "to issue".<sup>8</sup> Perhaps, although this is uncertain, *Lan* may also mean "offering something for holy matters". There does not seem to be a word for *Lan* in Iranian sources. On the other hand, *Lankelli*, which appears in the Fortification texts, is the name of the eighth month in the Elamite calendar<sup>9</sup>, but there is no information about its meaning or its relation to the *Lan* ceremony.

The word *lansiti* is used in Middle Elamite texts, especially from Chogha Zanbil. The Akkadian equivalent is *hurāṣu*, which means "gold" (Steve, 1967: T.Z.2, p. 122). In the same texts *lania* seems to mean "silver". In Akkadian the ideogram used to write *lānu* meaning "body", "figure" and "appearance" is the same as that for *šalmu* meaning "statue" (CAD 1973, "l.", p. 78). Perhaps a *Lan* ceremony was connected with a statue, but it is more likely that it came to the Persians via the Elamites rather than the Babylonians, as Elamites and Persians had a closer relationship (Parsa Daneshmand, personal communication). In PF 772 (K<sub>1</sub>) the text describes performing the *Lan* ceremony at eleven *lankul* (*la-an-ku-el*) (Hallock 1969, p. 229, but he reads this word as *lanku* EL). This word,

a combination of *lan* with another (unknown word, is not Old Persian. It might be a place that was used for performing a ritual ceremony of *Lan* with food offerings (Hinz and Koch 1987, p. 803) It is possible that *lankul* may have survived with a slight change. New Persian *langar*, anchor, could be related to *lankul*. An archaic meaning of *langar* is a monastery or ritual place of Sufis, where food was distributed amongst people, especially those who were poor (Dchkhoda, *Logat-nāma*, 1330/1951, s.v. *langar*, p. 301; Tabrizi 1357/1978, p. 1908), but more evidence is needed for such a link.

The only Fortification text in which *Lan* is not used as an independent form but as a ceremony for a god, refers to the Elamite god Humban (PF-NN 2202: 35). The *Lan* ceremony was not performed for Iranian gods, or any other god, but only Humban, which can be seen as evidence for its Elamite connection. *Lan* was an independent ceremony, but at times it appears in connection with other gods, which indicates a link between *Lan*, gods and sacred places that received rations. The unpublished text PF-NN 2202:36 (V:K<sub>1</sub>) states: "12 BAR of grain, supplied by (*kurmin*) Zautriš, Manuša received for *daušam* (libation/offering) of *Lan* (ceremony), for the god Humban ... (the city of) Tikraš, 20th year (of Darius)". This is the only example of the *Lan* ceremony performed for a god, the Elamite god Humban; in all the other texts *Lan* is an independent and separate ceremony. The word *daušam*, which has been written in different forms, *dauša*, *daušiyam* and *tamšiyam*, seems to be a loanword deriving from the Iranian (Old Persian) *dauça*.<sup>10</sup> *Tamšiyam*, is an Elamitised form of *daušiyam*, meaning libation or offering for gods and ritual ceremonies<sup>11</sup>. The Avestan form of this word is known as

*zaoθra*, also meaning libation, but with one difference: *zaoθra* is a liquid offering (water, milk, juice of plants and so forth), while *mayazd* is a non-liquid offering (bread, fruit and other foods).<sup>12</sup> In the case of *Lan* ceremonies, the word *daušiyam* is used for both liquid and non-liquid offerings.

As already mentioned above, *Lan* is usually written on its own, but in texts about Ritual Payments it appears with divine names. It is interesting that here the names of the various gods are written along with each other. For example, Ahuramazda is named with Humban,<sup>13</sup> and Ahuramazda and Mithra appear together with Šimut.<sup>14</sup> This shows the flexible nature of religion in the Achaemenid period and suggests that there was religious freedom during this period. In other texts *Lan* appears with Humban,<sup>15</sup> Mithra (Mišebaka), the Sun god<sup>16</sup>, Nariyosang (Narišanka)<sup>17</sup> and the mountain Ariyaramna (h. KUR.lg Harriyaramna = Aryaramnes).<sup>18</sup>

#### OTHER RITUAL CEREMONIES IN PERSEPOLIS FORTIFICATION TABLETS

*Lan* is only one of the ceremonies described in the tablets, but compared with other ceremonies, it is much more common. Besides *Lan*, the following ceremonies are mentioned: *Šip*, *Akriš*, *Nah*, *Nuaš*, *Pumazziš* and *Dausika*. After *Lan*, *Šip* is the most frequently mentioned ceremony. The statistical breakdown of these ceremonies is shown in Table 1.

In the seven texts about *Šip* there are two interesting points. First, the *Šip* ceremony in one case is performed for a god named Zizkurra (PF-NN 654: E). Secondly, in PF-NN 1665:T, after performing the *Šip*

TABLE 1. Ceremonies and rations.

Name of ceremony	<i>Lan</i>	<i>Šip</i>	<i>Akriš</i>	<i>Nah</i>	<i>Nuaš</i>	<i>Pumazziš</i>	<i>Dausika</i>
Number of examined texts	76	7	2	1	1	1 mutual with <i>Šip</i>	1
Rations	small cattle grain barley wine beer fig date flour	small cattle male sheep grain wine flour killed duck	grain	grain	grain	small cattle	wine

*Šip* ceremony, the ration of about 21.2 small cattle is consumed by 212 men (one small cattle for 10 men). In other texts the ration has been used for the *Šip* ceremony itself, probably consumed by workers as well. *Akriš* is referred to in two texts. In both cases the *Akriš* ceremony is performed for an unidentified god. For *Nah* and *Nuaš* only the word libation, *daušiyam*, is used, libation of *Nah*<sup>19</sup> and libation of *Nuaš*<sup>20</sup>, but the latter may have been a scribal error.

#### ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESS FOR PERFORMING A *LAN* CEREMONY

Those responsible for providing rations at a *lan* ceremony were individuals with the administrative designation of *kurmin* (supplier).<sup>21</sup> The ration seems to have been supervised by individuals who were appointed as *dama(na)* (assigner) and *šarama(na)* (apportioner). They probably had lists and diagrams with recorded wages and rations for each person or group. They were also responsible for travel and ritual rations. Sometimes the King himself assigned the rations. PF 753 (K<sub>1</sub>), which is about Ritual Payments, shows that for performing a *lan* ceremony at Harbuš, "12 *marriš* of wine ... is assigned as ration by the King" (Hallock 1969, p. 226). The *lan* ceremony was therefore also of interest to the Persian kings. The sealed rations were either delivered by the suppliers or this was done by individuals with the title/designation *ullir(a)* (delivery man), but under the supervision of the suppliers. The recipients were individuals with administrative or religious designations or both. The texts show that the recipients, who used these rations for ritual ceremonies,<sup>22</sup> were personally present at the ceremonies. They could be a performer or a supervisor when the rations were consumed. They received the sealed commodity from the supplier, *ullir(a)*, and supervised the use of the assigned rations. But sometimes the receiver did not have a designation, either religious or administrative.

When *lan* ceremonies were performed on a daily basis, or the ration for one region was distributed in different places, the person receiving the ration would not be able to perform his administrative duties as well as his daily ritual duty. For example, the rations were distributed at various temples, mountains and rivers. It would be impossible for one and the same person to be present at every ceremony at the same time. It is possible that the recipient had colleagues, subordinates or assistants, who did not necessarily share his beliefs, but they stepped in and took part on his behalf. Perhaps one could suggest the following: the priest delivered an assigned ration for a ritual ceremony. A ration for each god was given to the priests of that particular religion and they would then be able to participate in their own religious ceremony. As *lan* was a ceremony shared by Iranians and Elamites, they could both participate in the ceremony.

#### COMMODITY AND RATION SPECIES

Commodities assigned and delivered as rations for the *lan* ceremony consisted of small cattle, grain, flour, wine, beer, *tarmu* (barley),<sup>23</sup> figs and dates (see Table 2 for statistics).

Wine, followed by flour, was the most popular commodity at *lan* ceremonies.<sup>24</sup> We do not have texts from a single place that has different rations for the same ceremony. This could mean that at the same time and place only one kind of commodity was delivered as a ration.

#### *The amount of ration*

There is no fixed amount of ration for *lan* ceremonies in the texts, as the rations are usually different. At the same time, specific and equal amounts are repeated the following year. Every region seems to have had a specific ration and amount for consump-

TABLE 2. *Rations for the lan ceremony.*

Commodity	small cattle	grain	flour	wine	beer	barley ( <i>tarmu</i> )	figs	dates	total
Number of texts	2	18	19	28	5	2	1	1	76

tion. The difference among the regions may have depended on the population or the number of sites. For example, PF 743 mentions the *Lan* ceremonies for a period of 12 months in the 22<sup>nd</sup> year of Darius at Kaupirriš (modern Kamfiruz). The assigned ration consisted of 12 BAR of flour. In PF 746, on the other hand, 36 BAR of flour were delivered for the same period and the same time, to an unknown place. In PF 753, 12 *marriš* of wine were delivered in the 23<sup>rd</sup> year of Darius for a period of 12 months at Harbuš, and for the same period and the same year, 30 *marriš* of wine were delivered at Ankarakkan according to PF 759. In some cases, a specific period is mentioned, as for example from the 22<sup>nd</sup> until the 24<sup>th</sup> year of Darius, 4 BAR of flour were regularly delivered each month to Mattezziš<sup>25</sup>. The amount of wine delivered to this city was one-and-a-half *marriš* for each month, from the first to the eleventh month of the 23<sup>rd</sup> year.<sup>26</sup> Likewise, at Harbuš 12 *marriš* of wine were delivered in both the 22<sup>nd</sup> and the 23<sup>rd</sup> year of Darius.<sup>27</sup> This shows that each month Mattezziš received half a *marriš* more wine than Harbuš. Also of interest are two unpublished texts about the sacrifice of small cattle for the *Lan* ceremony. PF-NN2259: 7–8 (K<sub>1</sub>) mentions that 30 small cattle were delivered to Pasargadae as offerings for a *Lan* ceremony for a period of one month. According to the text, this ceremony was performed at a store-house, *balum*<sup>28</sup>, at Pasargadae. In lines 5–6, it is recorded that 118 small cattle were delivered for one month (the name is not mentioned) for performing six *Lan* ceremonies. The number 118 cannot be equally divided by 6 and we can therefore assume that rations at each of these six *Lan* ceremonies were different, but they were all added up in the text. It seems that small cattle were sacrificed at *Lan* ceremonies and the meat was then divided up amongst certain individuals. Texts about Ahuramazda and the god Mišduš(š) mention that after the ceremony the workmen, *kurtas*,

consumed the offering rations.<sup>29</sup> It seems that the ration was only noted when it was consumed by workmen, but not if regular consumers were involved.

With regard to sacrifices performed by the *magi*, we find a depiction of such a scene on one of the Daskyleion reliefs from western Asia Minor.<sup>30</sup> The *magi* are shown holding *barsom* bundles in their hands while performing a ritual ceremony at a sacred place (Fig. 1). In front of the two men are the heads of a sacrificed bull and lamb which are placed on a heap which resembles a bundle of twigs. It is not clear whether the heads were actually burnt with the twigs or whether the men refrained from polluting the sacred fire with the offering, as for example in the later Sasanian period. There are also sacrificial scenes on Achaemenid seals and seal impressions. (Moorey 1976, fig. 3b). Among the pre-Achaemenid Elamite reliefs of King Hanni from Kul-e Farrah there is a depiction of a sacrifice scene with an Elamite priest, which shows the background of a similar tradition amongst the Elamites.<sup>31</sup>

#### GEOGRAPHICAL EXPANSION

The seal impressions on the Fortification tablets suggest four categories, I–IV<sup>32</sup> for all the tablets. These correspond to four geographical regions. Table 3 shows the geographical distribution of the *Lan* ceremony according to the four geographical groups.

Most *Lan* ceremonies took place in Region I, that is the region of Persepolis, which comprises an area from the north of Pasargadae to Shiraz-Neiriz in the south. It is interesting to note that some regions seem to have had more Elamite than Iranian inhabitants, unexpectedly resulting in infrequent performances of *Lan* ceremonies, e.g. Region III. This does not mean that there were no Elamites in the Persepolis region, but it indicates that most inhabitants of Fahlia were Elamites. This

TABLE 3: Regions where *Lan* ceremonies were performed.

	Region I	Region II	Region III	Region IV			
Region	Persepolis region	Kamfiruz region	Fahlia region	North of Persepolis and Kamfiruz region	unknown	without geographical name	total
Number of texts	28	5	1	11	5	26	76

TABLE 4. *Geographical distribution of other ceremonies.*

Name of the ceremony	<i>Šip</i>	<i>Akriš</i>	<i>Nah</i>	<i>Nuaš</i>	<i>Pumazziš</i>	<i>Dausika</i>
Name of the city	Batrakataš (Pasargadae) 2 texts	Batrakataš 2 texts	Kaupirriš 1 text	Ø	Batrakataš 1 text	Ø
	Pumu 1 text					
	Iškema 1 text					
	Tikranuš 1 text					
	Appištapan 1 text					

assumption is confirmed by the following: the presence of important monuments in this region, as for example Kurangan, and the probable location of Hidali, the capital of the Elamites and the last Elamite defence point after the fall of Susa and Madaktu to the Assyrian army led by Ashurbanipal in 646 BC. According to tablets from the Fahlian region, the month names recorded in the texts were written mostly in Elamite. This is clear from the Persepolis Fortification texts. Closer to Susa, month names are in Elamite (Hallock 1969, p. 75). This could be an indication of more Elamite presence, particularly in the area between Hidali (perhaps modern Dezh-Espid, near Nur-abad?) and the Behbahan area (Achaemenid Dašer?).

Among the cities of the Persepolis region (Region I), Matezziš has the highest numbers of *Lan* ceremonies.<sup>33</sup> These are mentioned in 13 texts and the rations include flour and wine (PF 761, PF 762, PF-NN 250, PF 763, PF 764, PF 741, PF-NN 1141, PF-NN 1140, PF-NN 1138, PF 760, PF-NN 1601, PF-NN 1602, Fort 3126). Two of these texts are without a geographical name but other data from the tablets confirms the connection with Matezziš. This is followed by Pasargadae with two texts, where in each case the delivered ration consists of a large number of small cattle (see above). Then there are Tukraš (PF-NN 2202, PF 2073), Narezzaš, modern Neiriz (PE-NN 1262, PF 769), Karinuš (PF-NN 1836, PF-NN 2243) and Marsaškaš (PF 2036, PF 757) each with two texts. In Region II (modern Kamfiruz region), Harbuš has two texts, and in Region IV, Rašnumattiš, there are also two texts showing the highest number of *Lan* ceremonies.

Unfortunately, there are 26 tablets about ritual payments for the *Lan* ceremony which do not have a geographical name.<sup>34</sup> The geographical distribution of other ceremonies is presented in Table 4.

#### PRIESTS, THEIR RANKS AND DESIGNATIONS

In Ritual Payments, and especially in *Lan* texts, the designations and ranks of the recipients are sometimes recorded. In Ritual Payment texts, the recipients not only have an administrative designation but they are also the participants, performers and priests in the ritual ceremonies. In category F texts ("utilisation"), we have a record of the use of rations by the recipients.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps they had a duty to supervise the use of rations. In fact, the designation of the recipient is both religious and administrative. The first and most familiar designation is *makuš* (*magus*). *Lan* texts and all Ritual Payments mention individuals with the designation *makuš*, when receiving a ration and using it for the libation of *Lan* or the gods. It is interesting that the Iranian *magi* are in charge of performing *Lan*, a ceremony of Elamite origin. It should be pointed out that in Achaemenid-Elamite texts, the names and ceremonies of Iranian origin are used in their original form without being translated into Elamite, e.g. *daušiyam*, *Lan*, which is well-known amongst Iranians, is used in its original Elamite form without being translated. This is an indication of mixture of religions.

In PF 1953:1–2 (K<sub>1</sub>) there are two recipients: one with an Iranian designation, *haturmakša* (*āzarvaxš*)<sup>36</sup>

and the other with an Elamite designation, *šatin* (priest). Both priests, who represent two completely different religions, seem to have received rations for performing one and the same ritual ceremony, namely *Lan*. In PF-NN 2211: 4–5 (V:K<sub>1</sub>) a *magus* with the name Ušdamina received 19 BAR of grain as ration for a *Lan* ceremony, as well as for the (earth) goddess Spenta-Armaiti (Išpandaramattiš)<sup>37</sup> and the god Mithra (here: d. Miššcbaka). Text PF-NN 2337: 1–2 (V:K<sub>3</sub>), which is similar to the former text, mentions a *šatin* with the Iranian name Bakabadda (Baṣpad or Bavpād), who received 30 *irtiba*<sup>38</sup> of grain as rations for a *Lan* ceremony and also for the same deities: the goddess Išpandaramattiš (Spenta-Armaiti) and for the god Mithra (here: d. Mišebaka). How could an Iranian *magus* perform a *Lan* ceremony and how could an Elamite *šatin* perform ceremonies for Iranians and non-Elamite gods? The Elamite scribes seem to have been aware of the difference between *magus* and *šatin*<sup>39</sup>. For example, *magus* has minor ranks and levels, but *šatin* does not. Also, neither designation was ever used as a logogram or a general term for priests. This is made clear in text PF 1953:1–2 (V), where two individuals are responsible for giving out rations for a *Lan* ceremony. One has the designation *haturmakša*, a rank among the *magi*, and the other is a *šatin*, an Elamite priest.

In order to gain a better understanding of the designations, it is necessary to put them into categories. We can follow changes in the designations of certain individuals by the information about the degrees and ranks of each designation in the Ritual Payment tablets. For example, a person by the name of Yašda at Matezziš, is one of the recipients of a *Lan* ration from the beginning of the 23<sup>rd</sup> year to the beginning of the 24<sup>th</sup> year of Darius. He has the religious-administrative designation *haturmakša* in eight texts.<sup>40</sup> The designation can also be administrative, as according to some non-religious texts and categories, the bearer of this title is responsible for administrative activities. The designation *haturmakša* is an important designation because in Fort. 3126, in the 23<sup>rd</sup> year of Darius, Yašda is described as the Matezziš *haturmakša*, that is the *haturmakša* of the city of Matezziš, which would be an important position. From the second month of the 24<sup>th</sup> year until the beginning of the tenth month we have no texts about him, but suddenly in the tenth month of the 24<sup>th</sup> year<sup>41</sup> we find him with a new designation *makuš Lan lirira*<sup>42</sup> (*Lan* performer *magus*). In a further example, Aššika is a recipient whose working area is not mentioned. He was a *Lan lirira* (a

*Lan* performer) for two years<sup>43</sup>, and in the third year he became *makuš Lan lirira*.<sup>44</sup> Many texts mention the *magi* as *makuš* without a reference to their *Lan* performing ability. It seems that performing *Lan* was a specialism, which an Iranian could gain before being promoted to the position of a *magus*. This would add to his status. As some individuals received rations for the *Lan* ceremony with only a *magus* designation and without the suffix of *Lan lirira*, we can assume that the designation *makuš Lan lirira* was used for the supervisor of *Lan*-performing ceremonies. It seems that *Lan lirira* was a separate skill which a *magus* could gain. But we have been unable to find a *šatin* with the special designation of *Lan lirira* in any *Lan* texts and other Ritual Payments. Perhaps this was an ordinary skill and part of the responsibility of a *šatin*. It was therefore not necessary to refer to the *Lan lirira* designation. With regard to a *magus*, on the other hand, this was a special ability added to his duties. It is not clear whether performing a *Lan* ceremony was one of the stages for attaining the position of a *magus*, or whether it was an acquired specialism which was not related to being a *magus*.

Another designation, which is referred to twice in the *Lan* texts, is *pirramasda*<sup>45</sup> (once written as *pirramadda*). The tablets do not reveal any information about the grades and duties of this designation. But other ritual texts show that this designation follows the *magus* designation, i.e. *makuš pirramasdu*.<sup>46</sup> We do not know if this is an administrative position or a rank in the priestly hierarchy. The word *pirramasda* is Iranian because of its form, and because in PF 773 the name of the holder of this designation is Narišanka (Nariyosang), an Iranian name of an Avestan deity.

The designations mentioned in the *Lan* texts can be approximately categorised, although there are some designations known from other texts, for example *makuš haturmakša*,<sup>47</sup> which show that two designations were used for one person at the same time. More research on designations and religious-administrative ranks in connection with Ritual Payment texts is necessary.

#### PLACE OF A *LAN* CEREMONY

There is not much information about where this sacred ceremony was performed. There are a few references to specific places for performing a *Lan* as *lankul*, but no temple names are given.

One of texts, PF-NN 2259:7–8: (V:K<sub>1</sub>), refers to an unusual place, a storage place (*balum*), for performing a *Lan* ceremony. More examples of performing ritual ceremonies in store houses can be found in a few other Ritual Payment texts. In the same text, lines 13–14, 11 small cattle are given to 11 store houses as offerings for a god called Karbaišya.<sup>48</sup> Here, lines 15–16, and in PFa2: E, there are two references to small cattle as offerings: in one case they are given to 16 store houses at *kušukum*, which could be a shrine or a sacred place, as the offering here is “for the gods”. This can be regarded as evidence for the close connection between *kušukum* and the store houses. In the second case it is reported that eight small cattle have been given to store houses as offerings for two gods in two places, including a *kušukum*. In PF-NN 2259:9–10 (V: K<sub>1</sub>) offerings for a god called *Minaum* are made in a “wine storehouse” at Pasargadae. It is possible that there was a close link between store houses and sacred places, where ritual ceremonies like *Lan* were performed. Then there is a *partetaš* at Pasargadae where ritual ceremonies were performed. This could be the Iranian word *para-daesa* or a walled garden (the later word “paradise”). In the Achaemenid period a *partetaš* had various functions, but it is interesting that each garden had a sacred place and that some of the gardens themselves could be sacred. We know from Assyrian sources that the Elamites had sacred forests and, like the Iranians, showed respect for such spaces. We may therefore suggest that some gardens had shrines for ritual purposes.

As already mentioned above, *lankul* also appears as a place for performing *Lan* ceremonies; it may simply be a *Lan* performing place.

#### TERMS FOR RATION RECEIVED FOR THE LAN CEREMONY

The way rations are received is mentioned in two ways: 1. as rations (Elamite *gał*) for ritual use, and 2. as *daušiyam* (*daušam*, *dauša*, *tamšiyam*), which can be translated as libation or offering. There is only one text where both terms occur together but have different meanings: PF-NN 2372: 1–2 (V:K<sub>1</sub>) mentions: “... as ration (*gał*) of libation (*dauša*) for the god Humhan and *Lan* (ceremony).” It is interesting that the word *Lan* is never mentioned together with the word *bakadaušiya* (libation for a god), which we know from other texts.

This word is the same as *daušiya* with the prefix *baka*, that is *baga* (god).

#### GODS AND THE LAN CEREMONY

*Lan* texts also give information about the names of gods and sacred places to which offerings were made. These were the gods Mithra (Mišebaka), Mariraš, Humban and Nariyosang (Narišanka). These tablets mention the *Lan* ceremony in connection with a variety of gods, which indicates that worshippers of Iranian and Elamite deities were associated with *Lan* performances.<sup>49</sup>

#### TIMES OF PERFORMING LAN

The *Lan* rations are regulated during certain months of the year. Some rations have monthly dates and at the end of some texts the ration delivered for a whole year is divided proportionally between each month. For example, PF 758 mentions, “12 *marriš* of wine, Irdakur-radduš, the *Lan* performer *magus*, received as offering, *daušam*, for *Lan* (ceremony), 19<sup>th</sup> year, 1<sup>st</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> month, totaling 12 months”. The following information is added at the end “for each month he receives one *marriš*”.

Many texts indicate that rations were counted monthly and not annually. Few texts mention daily rations for the *Lan* performances. According to PF 748, the recipient “has received 3 *marriš* for one month, daily 1 QA”.<sup>50</sup> In PF 1953: 1–2 (K<sub>1</sub>) the ration paid in the sixth month is for a period of nine days. This shows that nine days were assigned to the *Lan* ceremony. In PF-NN 2259: 5–9 (V:K<sub>1</sub>) six *Lan* (ceremonies) are performed within a month. Therefore, we can see that *Lan* was performed daily and monthly, and for specific periods on unidentified occasions (e.g. a nine-day period for six *Lan* within a month). It was not performed at a specific or fixed time, but most *Lan* texts date to the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> year of Darius (see Table 5).

#### METHOD OF PERFORMING A LAN CEREMONY

As *Lan* texts are basically financial reports, they do not explain how the ceremony was performed and few details about the performances are provided. Other

TABLE 5. Random selection of *Lan* performances during years 14–28.

Number of texts	1	2	1	2	5	2	6	5	12	17	9	7	.	1	6
Year	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28

Ritual Payment texts are more useful and allow us to suggest a possible procedure.

1. Rations for the ceremony were regulated for a limited period by, perhaps, authorised individuals, *dama(na)* or *šarama(na)*. 2. A person with the designation *kurmin* or supplier provided the rations from the storage houses or other centres and was in charge of a particular commodity<sup>51</sup>. He delivered the commodity to other individuals, who were in charge of receiving these rations. This was done on a monthly basis or during specific periods and had to be used for ritual ceremonies. The recipients often had a religious designation which could also be an administrative rank. These people, who have a religious title, can be divided into two groups — *magus* and *šatin*. There is no evidence for another kind of priest. The recipient used the ration for ritual purposes or distributed the ration amongst priests, temples and other sacred places. If the recipient did not use it himself, then he would offer it as a present at a ceremony. He may have had administrative control over the way the ration was used. In other texts the word *bakadaušiya* (libation to a god) is often used in connection with gods, but in *Lan* texts it is not mentioned or specifically used for the *Lan* ceremony. It may be that *Lan* was a kind of blessing ceremony which did not have to involve the gods. An exception here is the god Humban (see above). Perhaps this is the reason why the word *daušiya* is mentioned without *baka* in the *Lan* texts. It is possible that priests, who were responsible for the ceremony, delivered the received ration to a special place and used it there. Sometimes the amount of commodity is so much that it could not have all been used up at once. It is unlikely that such amounts of rations were offered to one place only and that the participants in the ceremony were able to use such rations themselves. Here the Ritual Payment texts of Ahuramazda and the god Mariraš come to our help. Texts related to rations for these two gods mention at the end that "... then workers consumed". This means that the workers were the last to consume the gods' rations. It is possible that priests of the lower ranks went through a special process and

took the allocated amount of offering as *Lan* ration to the place where the ceremony was performed. Then the ration was perhaps placed on an altar and only a small amount was presented as an offering. During the ceremony, when singing of religious hymns was usual, the ration was consecrated. Not all prayers and religious hymns were the same and in the case of *Lan* each priest could sing the sacred hymns of his own religion in his own ceremony. Afterwards, the offerings were distributed among special individuals as a sacred ration or food. With regard to small cattle, we may suggest that only one or a few small cattle were sacrificed at the ceremony, and not all of them. The head was then placed in a special place, as shown on the relief from Daskyleion (Fig. 1). After the ceremony, the live small cattle, by now consecrated, were divided up between individuals. As described above, in one case 118 small cattle were delivered for six *Lan* ceremonies. It is unlikely that all these animals were sacrificed in six *Lan* ceremonies.

Information about sacrificial ceremonies amongst the Iranian people is best found in the Avesta. In the *Yasht*, particularly *Ābān Yasht* and *Tīr Yasht*, sacrifices for divine beings, especially in the form of horses, bulls and sheep, are described.<sup>52</sup> It seems as if this tradition was current amongst the ancient Iranian people and the Achaemenids may have followed this tradition. Herodotus mentions such a practice: "When he [the worshipper] has cut up the animal and cooked it, he makes a little heap of the softest green stuff he can find, preferably clover, and lays all the meat upon it. This done, a magus (a member of this caste is always present at sacrifices) utters an incantation over it in a form of words which is supposed to recount the birth of the gods. Then after a short interval the worshipper removes the flesh and does what he pleases with it."<sup>53</sup> Herodotus could not have been a witness to such a ceremony himself, but perhaps these details were given to him by Iranians in Asia Minor. The scene on the Daskyleion relief (Fig. 1) can be compared with the above statement and confirms the tradition of sacrifice by the *magi*. The Ritual Payment texts show that the



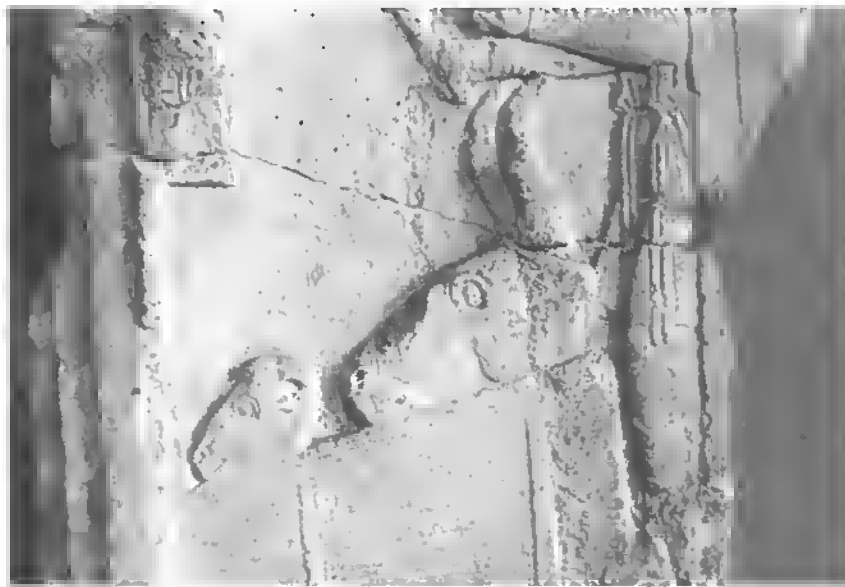


Fig. 1. Daskyleion relief, detail of sacrifice.

Achaemenids had an independent religion, which was of ancient Iranian origin, although influenced by Median *magi* and their beliefs.<sup>54</sup> Some names in the tablets correspond to names in the Avesta, for example Spenta-Armaiti, Nariyosang and others, but there are no references to Zarathushtra and the Avesta. The beliefs of the Achaemenids and their religious ceremonies, as seen through the Persepolis tablets and royal inscriptions, were related to the *Yashts* but not to other parts of the Avesta.

#### POSSIBLE EVIDENCE FOR THE *LAN* CEREMONY

There is no reference to any other ceremony as popular as *Lan*. There may be still undiscovered reliefs showing this ceremony. Perhaps the name *Lan* and the ceremony itself were changed at a later time and continued in another form. As already mentioned above, we have to take into account that, according to the tablets, most *Lan* ceremonies were performed in the city of Matezziš,<sup>55</sup> which was located near Persepolis. Many Fortification Ritual texts mention the name Matezziš together with Parsa (Persepolis); this suggests that these two places were closely connected.<sup>56</sup> Is it possible to suggest that a ceremony with such a wide distribution and influence was continuously performed near Persepolis, but was not current at Persepolis itself? Unfortunately, there are no documents relating to *Lan*

being performed at Persepolis. If this ceremony was performed at Persepolis, then there should be evidence of such performances on the reliefs. The only case where it could be shown is the so-called "servant" reliefs,<sup>57</sup> sometimes known as "gift or tribute-bearers" reliefs. The best examples of these reliefs at Persepolis were found in the Tachara and Hadish palaces (Figs. 2, 4), Palaces G (Fig. 3), H and the Tripylon Gate. The people shown on the reliefs carry objects that are different from what is carried by the particular "gift-bearers" on the reliefs of the Apadana palace. Even their clothes differ, as all of them wear Persian and Median dresses only and their headdress covers the head, chin and neck completely. This type of headdress is different to that shown on the Apadana reliefs. Also, those wearing Persian dress on the so-called "servant" reliefs have this sort of headdress (Fig. 4). It is familiar to us from other reliefs, as for example at Daskyleion (Ghirshman 1964, p. 347, pl. 440). This type of head covering, as seen on Persepolis seals<sup>58</sup> or the Oxus Treasure<sup>59</sup>, is typical of priests. The designation servant may therefore not be correct. Just because these people were carrying large leather containers, carefully-covered vessels and, most important of all, live goats and lambs to the palaces, did not mean that they were servants who were carrying food for the King. In addition, the material shown on these reliefs is far more than could have been used by the King and the Royal Family. It is unlikely that the slaughtering, preparation and roasting of livestock would actually take place in an



*Fig. 2. Persepolis. Western stairway of Hadish palace.*



*Fig. 4. Persepolis. Western stairway of Hadish palace.*



*Fig. 3. Persepolis. Palace G.*



Fig. 5. Seal impression from Persepolis. After Shuhbazi 1978.

official area of the palace and in front of the King, since there is no evidence of any kitchen inside the palace. It is more likely that these goats and lambs were taken away to be sacrificed at a ritual ceremony. The large leather containers must have contained wine prepared for libation and offerings at the ceremony, although there is no evidence of the exact content. Perhaps they contained the above-named rations for ritual libation, which occur in ritual texts. The *Lan* texts record for each *Lan* only one commodity, but it is possible that the ration for a royal *Lan* was larger. On the other hand, there is no evidence to suggest that this was necessarily a *Lan* ceremony, but just a ritual ceremony. According to documents found during the excavations at the site, there was in addition to ceremonies such as *Šip* and others, another ceremony performed at Persepolis, which was different to *Lan*.<sup>60</sup> During the excavations in the northern part of the Treasury Palace at Persepolis and especially in Hall No. 38, many mortars, pestles and vessels made of a green stone were discovered. These had inscriptions in Aramaic script which referred to the performance of a ritual ceremony. These objects are recorded in the Treasury archive.<sup>61</sup> The date assigned and the number of these mortars, pestles and vessels show that the ceremonies took place several

times a year. The objects were returned to the Treasury after they had been used and were never used again. Scenes of such a ceremony appear on seal impressions from Persepolis (Fig. 5). This ceremony was performed before an altar and a mortar and pestle were placed on a table. The Aramaic inscriptions on these stone objects from the Treasury and the function of the objects in the ceremony, have prompted some to suggest that it was a Haoma-crushing ceremony (Bowman 1970, pp. 6–8), but this is doubtful. This is an old and authentic Iranian ceremony<sup>62</sup>. We also have the depiction of another ceremony on Achaemenid seals, similar to the relief of the King before a fire altar at the top of Achaemenid tombs at Naqsh-e Rostam and Persepolis. This ceremony was performed only in front of an altar and fire.<sup>63</sup> In contrast to a Haoma-crushing ceremony, the *Lan* ceremony was performed continuously. In the so-called Haoma-crushing ceremony there is often a priest or *magus* standing alone and there are no libation rations and commodities for gods. The priest performing the ceremony sometimes holds a *barsom* in his hand and wears a headdress in the Median fashion. Such a scene in the presence of a priest or a *barsom*-holding person can be seen on another relief from Daskylion in the Archaeological Museum, Istanbul.

Here, the figure holding a *barsom* is standing in front of a temple. Below the Persepolis platform, near the north-western corner, there are the ruins of an Achaemenid temple and a temple of the post-Achaemenid period, belonging to the kings of Persis of the Frataraka Dynasty (Schmidt, 1953, fig. 17A).

With regard to the reliefs at Persepolis, it is better to refer to the participants in this ceremony not as "servants, attendants, gift-bearers or food-carriers" but as "carriers of religious offerings", "priests carrying libations" or "priests" and *magi*. The figure moving ahead always wears a Persian dress, and there is no *barsom*, and there are no mortars, pestles or flat vessels as found at the Treasury. There is no doubt that in some palaces of Persepolis ritual ceremonies were performed, and perhaps one of these was the *Lan* ceremony. It is still unclear at what time and where the *Lan* ceremony was performed, or until what date, and whether it survived until a later date under a different name. Perhaps the libation which is mentioned by the Sasanian king Shapur (A.D. 241–272) in his inscription at the Ka'ba-ye Zartusht, is the continuation of the *Lan* ceremony: "For the happiness of our soul is assigned daily one lamb, one *grw* and 5 *hōfan* half-loaves and 4 *pās* of wine should be given ... for the happiness of the soul of the Lord Sāsān and King Pāpak and King Šāpur son of Pāpak and King of Kings Ardašir..."<sup>64</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

It is not clear whether the *Lan* ceremony survived under another form or name. According to tablets and other references and testimonies mentioned, we may suggest that a libation ceremony existed among the ancient Iranian tribes. After the migration of the Persians to the south to the neighbourhood of the Elamites, they may have been influenced by the local culture, civilisation, ceremonies and traditions which gradually became their own. Later, when the Elamites became weak and the Persians conquered Anshan, it was the turn of the Elamites to be influenced by the Persians. For this reason, Persians and Elamites share many similarities. The libation ceremony which was common to both peoples, was known by its Elamite name. The Elamites had many ritual ceremonies, but we do not have much information about these. Gold and silver statues found at Susa<sup>65</sup> from the Middle Elamite period, the reliefs at Kul-e Farah,<sup>66</sup> and Elamite seal impressions from

Susa<sup>67</sup>, all show libation ceremonies in Elam. But we have to remember that the newcomers had little knowledge of the Elamite administrative system. At the beginning, they used Elamite scribes who had an ancient tradition of writing and administration, which went back almost two and a half millennia. It was only later that the Persians introduced their own writing. The tablets mention how Persian servants were copying tablets.<sup>68</sup> Some of these scribes had Persian names. Before this, Elamite scribes had recorded similar Iranian ceremonies as their own ceremony, but with growing Persian influence in administrative, religious and tribunal matters, Persian words replaced Elamite words in the texts. Certain Elamite words remained in use until the end of the Achaemenid period. One of these loanwords is *Lan*, which refers to Persian and Elamite ritual ceremonies, but the exact purpose of such a ceremony is not known. If a *Lan* ceremony was not performed for a god, then perhaps it was a request for a blessing and peace, or for the survival of the identity of the people of the Achaemenid empire, a request for good health, or it may have been an offering for the souls of the dead and ancestors. We cannot talk about the real purpose of *Lan* without more documentation, even though it was one of the most important and popular religious traditions of the time. Perhaps the discovery of new finds and the translation of the remainder of the Persepolis Fortification Tablets will shed more light on the *Lan* ceremony. At present, this once popular ceremony in ancient Iran remains unknown and mysterious.

#### Notes

- \* This paper is the result of collecting all the so-called *Lan* texts and texts about other ritual ceremonies, the published Fortification Texts, PF, as well as unpublished texts of R.T. Hallock. I tried to find as many translated Persepolis Fortification Tablets as possible, but of the unpublished texts translated by George Cameron (Fort.) only a few were available. The corpus of unpublished Fortification texts is not very large and more complete conclusions will be possible only if more texts are translated and published. The Persian version of this paper was published in 1998 in *Dr. Bahar Memorial Volume (Yād-e Bahār)*, Tehran. This is a revised edition and with the addition of some recently re-read Fortification Tablets. I am grateful to Wouter Henkelmann and Parsa Daneshmand for their comments, and to François Vallat for his help. I would also like

- to thank Dr. A. Sh. Shahbazi for allowing me to publish the drawing of a seal impression from Persepolis (Fig. 5).
- <sup>1</sup> Some of these have no inscriptions, others have only a seal impression, and there are those without even a seal impression.
  - <sup>2</sup> Hallock 1969, p. 1.
  - <sup>3</sup> The Book of Esther 6:1–2.
  - <sup>4</sup> Professional and non-professional salaried workers.
  - <sup>5</sup> Hallock's categories are as follows: Category D: General Receipts; Category I: Utilisation; Category G: Providing provisions; Category H: Receipts by Officials; Category K<sub>1</sub>: Rations for individuals with religious functions; Category K<sub>2</sub>: Regular monthly rations for named and qualified people; Category K<sub>3</sub>: Regular monthly rations for named but unqualified people; Category M: Special Rations; Category T: Letters; Category V: Journals. See also Hallock 1969, pp. 18ff. Texts with the PF designation are published texts, unpublished transliterated texts are written with PF-NN and the letter of their category.
  - <sup>6</sup> For some examples in Susa texts, see *lanini* and *lan(-)sitini* in MDP XI, no. XCIX (Frag. C. pl.12 n.3). 1:6: *la-an (-) sitini* 1:8: *la-ni-i-ni*; q: *la-an si-ti-i-ni*; also MDP IX, no. 281; 23 *la-an ma-ra ma-d[a-a]k*. See also Hinz and Koch, 1987, pp. 802–804.
  - <sup>7</sup> Reiner 1973, pp. 87–102.
  - <sup>8</sup> Hallock 1969, p. 719.
  - <sup>9</sup> Hallock 1969, p. 74.
  - <sup>10</sup> For the meaning and different forms of *daušam*, see Hallock 1969, p. 681.
  - <sup>11</sup> Cameron 1948, p. 7.
  - <sup>12</sup> Ushidari 1371 (1992), 446.
  - <sup>13</sup> PF 339 and the unpublished text PF-NN-379:E.
  - <sup>14</sup> PF 338.
  - <sup>15</sup> Also in the unpublished text PF-NN 2372: 1–2 (V: K<sub>1</sub>).
  - <sup>16</sup> Texts: PF 1956: 1–2 (K<sub>1</sub>), PF-NN 2211: 4–5 (V: K<sub>1</sub>), PF-NN 2337: 1–2 (V: K<sub>3</sub>), PF-NN 2265: 1–4 (V: K<sub>1</sub>), PF 1955: 1–3 (K<sub>1</sub>), PF-NN 2040: 2–3 (V: K<sub>1</sub>).
  - <sup>17</sup> PF 1960: 3–4 (K<sub>1</sub>).
  - <sup>18</sup> PF 1955: 1–3 (K<sub>1</sub>).
  - <sup>19</sup> PF 1802 (K<sub>1</sub>).
  - <sup>20</sup> PF 766 (K<sub>1</sub>).
  - <sup>21</sup> “Supplier” is a description of *kurmin*, for *kurmin* see Hallock, 1969, pp. 10–12.
  - <sup>22</sup> The “utilisation” of ration in E texts is explained by the word *huttaš* (and its various forms) in E texts with the meaning “to utilise”, Hallock 1969, p. 18.
  - <sup>23</sup> *Tarmu* is probably barley, because it was used for making beer.
  - <sup>24</sup> This conclusion is based on the available translated texts.
  - <sup>25</sup> PF 763 and PF 764 do not mention the name directly; PF 761, PF 762, PF-NN 250 (K<sub>1</sub>), PF-NN 1601 (K<sub>1</sub>), PF-NN 1602 (K<sub>1</sub>).
  - <sup>26</sup> PF-NN 1141 (K<sub>1</sub>), PF-NN 1140 (K<sub>1</sub>), PF-NN 1138 (K<sub>1</sub>), PF 760.
  - <sup>27</sup> PF-NN 556 (K<sub>1</sub>), PF 753.
  - <sup>28</sup> Hallock 1969, p. 674.
  - <sup>29</sup> Cf. texts PF 336, PF 337, and unpublished texts PF-NN 336 (E), PF-NN 978 (E), PF-NN 613 (E), E 679, PF-NN 679 (E), PF-NN 1679 (E).
  - <sup>30</sup> Ghirshman 1964, p. 347.
  - <sup>31</sup> Amiet 1966, p. 558, pl. 425.
  - <sup>32</sup> This division is presented in Hallock 1978, p. 109.
  - <sup>33</sup> *Matezziš* is the city which in Old Persian texts is called *Uvadačāya*; in Babylonian texts it is called *Humādešu*, see Hallock 1969, p. 728, under *Matezziš*; also Stolper 1984, p. 307, n.31.
  - <sup>34</sup> These results are based on the *Lan* texts in the published PF and unpublished texts of R.T. Hallock. It is possible that untranslated texts may give better or different results.
  - <sup>35</sup> For some examples, see PF 336, PF 337, PF-NN 978 (E).
  - <sup>36</sup> *Haturmakša* is a designation which in its Iranian form is known as *atra-vaxš*, the same as the later words *atarvaxš* and *āzarvaxš*. This is a designation of some individuals who were attendants at some part of Zoroastrian religious ceremonies. In V texts *haturmakša* has a completely administrative, rather than religious, meaning. But in E and K<sub>1</sub> texts it seems to imply religious duties, even though the designation had more an administrative, rather than religious role, see Hallock, 1969, p. 695.
  - <sup>37</sup> For *lšpandaramattiš*, see Razmjou 2001, pp. 7–15.
  - <sup>38</sup> One *iriba* = 3 BAR, see also Hallock 1969, pp. 72, 31, 705.
  - <sup>39</sup> The great care the scribes took in recording details of the texts could possibly show the accuracy of this subject.
  - <sup>40</sup> Cf. PF-NN 1141 (K<sub>1</sub>), PF-NN 1140 (K<sub>1</sub>), PF 761, PF 762, PF-NN 250 (K<sub>1</sub>), PF 760, PF-NN 1601 (K<sub>1</sub>).
  - <sup>41</sup> PF-NN 1602 (K<sub>1</sub>).
  - <sup>42</sup> The word *lirira* with the meaning “performer” is derived from *liri* with the meaning “to perform”, but in other texts, except Fortification Texts, e.g. Malyan texts, this has a different, unknown meaning. For the word *liri* see Hallock 1969, p. 721; also Stolper 1984, “Texts from Tall-i Malyan”, p. 56.
  - <sup>43</sup> PF-NN 1115 (K<sub>1</sub>), PF 768.
  - <sup>44</sup> PF-NN 598 (K<sub>1</sub>).
  - <sup>45</sup> PF-NN 2040: 2–3 (V: K<sub>1</sub>).
  - <sup>46</sup> For example, see PF 1957: 1.
  - <sup>47</sup> Cf. PF-NN 2200: 1–5 (V: K<sub>1</sub>).
  - <sup>48</sup> For the god *Karbaiša* and its relation with the name of a

- month in the Achaemenid calendar, see Razmjou 2004, pp. 15–34).
- <sup>49</sup> There is still no evidence for *Lan* performed in the name of the Babylonian god Adad (transliteration: d.lm.lg., Had-da-ud-da). His name is, however, mentioned in other Ritual Payments.
- <sup>50</sup> Each 10 QA is 1 *marriš* and each 1 QA is almost 0.92 litres. For weights and measures, see Hallock, 1969, pp. 72–74.
- <sup>51</sup> Each of the *kurmins* was in charge of wine or beer or dry commodities like flour, grain or barley.
- <sup>52</sup> For sacrifice in the Avesta, see Pour Davoud 1356 (1977) *Yashts*, Vol. I, footnote on p. 243. For sacrifice in *Tir Yasht* see 16: 58, p. 369, and in *Ābān Yasht* see: 25, pp. 107–08.
- <sup>53</sup> Herodotus, *The Histories*, I, 132.
- <sup>54</sup> The Median *magi* had also pre-Zoroastrian beliefs.
- <sup>55</sup> This conclusion has been drawn from the texts currently translated. There are still many texts awaiting translation.
- <sup>56</sup> PF 1786, PF-NN 1392 (S<sub>3</sub>), in these cities even *kurmins* are the same.
- <sup>57</sup> For example, see Ghirshman 1964, pp. 196, 197, 210.
- <sup>58</sup> For example, see Schmidt 1957, pl. 7, seal 20.
- <sup>59</sup> For the Oxus Treasure, see Dalton 1964. See also Ghirshman 1964, pp. 84, 91–93.
- <sup>60</sup> It is possible that ceremonies such as *Šip*, *akriš*, *dausika* were performed, but we do not have any evidence for these.
- <sup>61</sup> See Bowman 1970, pp. 6–15.
- <sup>62</sup> Boyce 1975, pp. 156–66.
- <sup>63</sup> See Parrot 1961, pls. 256, 258, 260.
- <sup>64</sup> See Back 1978, pp. 337, 338.
- <sup>65</sup> See Porada 1965, p. 65, pl. 12.
- <sup>66</sup> Calmeyer 1976, p. 148, fig. 8.
- <sup>67</sup> For some samples of Susa seals, see Porada 1965, pp. 46, 47.
- <sup>68</sup> PF 871, PF 1137.
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